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General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

305th meeting

Tuesday, 30 March 2010, 10 a.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Zinsou ..... (Benin)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Expression of sympathy in connection with the terrorist attacks in the Russian Federation

The Chairman (*spoke in French*): I would like at the outset to present my most sincere condolences to the Government and the people of the Russian Federation on the occasion of the terrorist attacks that occurred in Moscow yesterday, which took the lives of approximately 40 people and wounded dozens more.

Organization of work

The Chairman (*spoke in French*): I would like to remind delegations that the deadline for submitting names for inclusion on the list of participants is Wednesday 31 March at 6 p.m.

General exchange of views *(continued)*

Mr. Kim Bonghyun (Republic of Korea): At the outset, please allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission for the 2010 substantive session. My delegation appreciates your sincere and tireless efforts in bringing this session together, including your work during the previous three-year cycle. As a member of this year's Bureau, I would like to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in your work, as well as the work of the two working group chairs.

We have reached the middle of the three-year cycle, shortly before the nuclear security summit and the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). My delegation hopes and expects that this year's deliberations of the Commission will be able to facilitate the global efforts on disarmament and non-proliferation and lay a solid foundation for the 2011 substantive session.

In this regard, I would like to emphasize the importance of achieving relevance and balance in the work of the Disarmament Commission. Securing balance among the substantive agenda items may help restore the Commission's relevance, which has been unable to produce any recommendations since 1999. My delegation sincerely believes that practical confidence-building measure in the field of conventional weapons require more attention in this year's deliberations, taking into account both the upcoming Fourth Biennial Meeting of States on small arms, which will consider implementation of the United Nations United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and the first Preparatory Committee meeting for the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty.

Since 2009, the international community has witnessed positive developments in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, including the recent agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation on a new START Treaty. We believe that the

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agreement is a meaningful step towards nuclear disarmament, and we welcome it as a positive sign for the success of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. We also take note of other initiatives, including the five-point proposal by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the comprehensive report of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament.

My delegation firmly believes that further progress in nuclear disarmament is required for the sake of integrity, confidence and the legitimacy of the NPT regime. The outcome of the 2010 NPT Review Conference will be crucial to the future of the NPT regime, and we would like to see a firm commitment to nuclear disarmament. In this regard, my delegation would like to reiterate the importance of an entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the early commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty without further delay.

The Republic of Korea firmly believes in the importance of further reinforcement of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. We welcome the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1887 (2009), and strongly support the universalization of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) additional protocol as the best means to reinforce the monitoring and verification mechanism of the IAEA. We also appreciate the Nuclear Security Summit as both a timely and necessary initiative to address the challenges of nuclear terrorism and expect a fruitful outcome.

My delegation also would like to highlight the importance of the early resolution of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea nuclear issue, which is vital to securing lasting peace and prosperity on the Korean peninsula and in North-East Asia, as well as to sustaining the integrity of the global non-proliferation regime. In this regard, we urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return promptly to the Six-Party Talks, fully comply with its obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions, and implement the Joint Statement of 19 September 2005 and subsequent documents adopted at the Six-Party Talks. President Lee Myung-bak of the Republic of Korea has proposed a grand bargain initiative, which aims at a comprehensive agreement related to North Korea's irreversible denuclearization and the five parties' corresponding measures. We hope to engage in negotiations based on the grand bargain initiative when the Six-Party Talks resume.

The year 2010 is a truly crucial juncture in the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Bearing in mind the frustration that prevailed throughout the past decade, we should not let go of this better opportunity to further strengthen the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It is important that we demonstrate flexibility and a spirit of cooperation with a view to yielding greater progress in our deliberations in the Disarmament Commission. My delegation hopes that fruitful outcomes of this year's session of the Commission will contribute to adding momentum to the success of the upcoming NPT Review Conference.

Mr. Onemola (Nigeria): The Nigerian delegation wishes to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this deliberative body. Your wealth of experience in this field will guide our deliberations to a fruitful outcome. You may be assured of the support of the Nigerian delegation.

We commend the insights provided in the opening statement of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Sergio Duarte.

Nigeria aligns itself with the statement made by the Ambassador of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as with the statement on behalf of the African Group delivered earlier by my delegation. In addition, we would like to emphasize the following points.

It is regrettable that the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the main deliberative body of the United Nations charged with the responsibility of considering and making recommendations on various disarmament-related issues, as well as follow-up on relevant decisions and recommendations of the special sessions devoted to disarmament, has not succeeded in reaching consensus on the main substantive issues before it, even in the current circle.

Nigeria remains concerned about the serious threat which the existence of nuclear weapons poses to international peace and security. In this regard, we believe that nuclear disarmament should remain the highest priority of Member States and that the best way to address negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation is through multilateralism, a core principle endorsed by General Assembly resolution

63/50. We therefore call on nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States alike to redouble their efforts to achieve the objective of disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects in accordance with the spirit and letter of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

We are equally concerned over the growing expenditure on military hardware and the massive build-up of these destructive weapons at the expense of basic human needs. These weapons have contributed immensely to tarnishing the global security landscape.

Nigeria believes that negative security assurances made by nuclear-weapon States to non-nuclear-weapon States should be unconditional, legally binding and unequivocal. However, the current voting pattern does not portray this trend; rather, it has been marked by a high level of abstentions on the part of nuclear-weapon States and their allies. The last session of the General Assembly was no exception. We call on concerned Member States to reverse this trend in order to not promote mistrust and thereby revive the nuclear arms race, a development that could negate all the achievements acquired over the past decades.

Pending the achievement of a nuclear-free world, my delegation supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, as they represent positive steps and important measures towards strengthening global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We urge Member States in the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones to encourage other regions that have not yet done so to establish such zones.

In this regard, we welcome the entry into force of the Treaty of Pelindaba on 15 July 2009, and call on African Member States that have not yet signed or ratified the Treaty to do so in order to enhance its effective contribution to strengthening regional and global peace and security. Similarly, we call on the two nuclear-weapon States yet to ratify the Treaty of Pelindaba to do so without further delay.

Nigeria welcomes the positive developments in the ongoing arms reduction talks between the United States of America and the Russian Federation. This demarche by these two nuclear-weapon States is in accordance with the principles and objectives of the elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade. We further hope that it will serve as an impetus to the parties and their allies to achieve the ultimate goal of the NPT — the total and irreversible elimination of all nuclear weapons on Earth — thus enhancing the possibility of the realization of the much dreamt-of paradise on Earth.

Nigeria remains concerned by the proliferation and illicit manufacture and transfer of conventional weapons and commends the overwhelming number of Member States who contributed to the adoption of General Assembly resolution 61/89 on the establishment of an arms trade treaty. We look forward to the commencement in July 2010 of the process aimed at developing an arms trade treaty, and sincerely hope that it will eventually lead to the adoption of a legally binding instrument that will eliminate the destabilizing effects of the illicit trade, circulation and transfer of conventional weapons.

As a result of the high mobility and lethality of these weapons and their destructive effects in most developing countries, they are now being referred to as weapons of mass destruction. The pernicious effects of these weapons are that they maim lives and limbs and hinder Governments' attempts to promote development and the progress of humanity. They also foster a culture of corruption and multiply the risks of and encourage the transfer of arms into the hands of non-State actors.

It is for these reasons that my delegation continues to actively support the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In this connection, we wish to call on all delegations to pay special attention to the aspects of the Programme of Action relating to cooperation and technical assistance at the forthcoming Fourth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action.

On the elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade, the Nigerian delegation wishes to emphasize the following several points. There is a need to strengthen efforts to advance the goal of general and complete disarmament based on the principles of verifiability, transparency and irreversibility, as well as the principle of undiminished security for all. We stress the importance of the goals and objectives of the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. Negotiations should commence on a non-discriminatory and internationally verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. The entry into force of the

Comprehensive-Test-Ban Treaty should be expedited. Cooperation, assistance and capacity-building should be promoted to Member States, subregions and regions in order to contribute to the aforementioned objectives.

The significant roles being played by civil society, the academic community and non-governmental organizations in raising awareness and providing impetus for progress in the fields of disarmament and non-proliferation should be encouraged. The importance of the mutually reinforcing relationship between disarmament and development should be emphasized, and we should endeavour to ensure the least possible diversion of the world's already scarce human and economic resources to armaments, as provided for in the Charter of the United Nations. Such efforts, we believe, would incite the international community to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and to recognize the contribution that disarmament could provide to meeting them.

We therefore wish to appeal to all Member States to expedite action on the draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade in order to conclude the related preparatory work during the 2010 session of the Commission. We further appeal to all Member States to show flexibility and understanding of one another's points of view so that we can together achieve the required consensus in our deliberations at this session.

Mr. Cuello Camilo (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of this important Commission. We recognize your excellent diplomatic skills and vast experience in disarmament affairs. Your previous work presiding over an important working group of the Commission promises an excellent session. You can count on the fullest collaboration of the Dominican Republic in ensuring a successful outcome of your work. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau and the Chairs of the Working Groups.

I should like to acknowledge the praiseworthy efforts being exerted by the Secretary-General and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs with a view to giving new impetus to the disarmament programme of the United Nations.

As the High Representative said yesterday in his statement at the opening of the session, the Commission is beginning its work this year in an atmosphere that is different from that of previous years, characterized as it is by a spirit of affirmative multilateralism that facilitates deliberations on disarmament and non-proliferation. The Dominican Republic associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Rio Group.

On this occasion, I shall address several items of particular importance to the Dominican Republic. The Dominican Republic is a pacifist country that has never invaded another country despite the hostilities it has suffered before, during and since we attained independence in 1844. The Dominican Republic neither produces nor exports weapons. The Dominican Republic therefore supports disarmament without reservations.

The Dominican Republic therefore believes, as the representative of Indonesia said yesterday on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, that the United States of America and the Russian Federation, in their efforts to conclude a post-START agreement, must consider all the possibilities offered by our multilateral disarmament commitments. We trust that the political will demonstrated by the parties will lead us in that direction.

Therefore, the Dominican Republic believes that the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation regime requires the preservation, improvement and completion of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The NPT is the true cornerstone and fundamental instrument of our efforts to attain disarmament and non-proliferation. As the representative of Spain said yesterday on behalf of the European Union, the three complementary pillars of the NPT — non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy — make it a unique and irreplaceable framework for maintaining and strengthening international peace, security and stability. We must generate the necessary political will and impetus to ensure that the upcoming meeting of the Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT will strengthen disarmament mechanisms in general.

We welcome the initiative launched by the United States to convene an important summit in Washington, D.C., to address the issues of terrorism and nuclear security. It is critical to prevent terrorists from acquiring nuclear weapons.

That leads us to the issue of the vulnerability of the Caribbean region arising from the transportation through our region of radioactive waste. Efforts to confront the challenge of climate change have promoted a renewed boom in energy generation by new nuclear power plants currently under construction. It is therefore likely that we will see an increase in the quantity and frequency of radioactive waste shipments travelling through our vulnerable region. Clearly, the transport of such waste exposes us to possible terrorist attacks, which could have tragic consequences for our fragile maritime and coastal ecosystems.

The Dominican Republic therefore reiterates that the transportation of radioactive waste must be carried out in full respect for the sovereignty of the nations of the Caribbean basin. Routes must be planned and the transportation of radioactive waste must take place in such a way as to minimize the risk of terrorist attacks or accidents that could affect our region, and in full compliance with the principles of international law. We should also be provided with guarantees that, should the unthinkable occur and an accident take place, we would be adequately compensated.

Another issue of particular importance to the Dominican Republic is that of the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. This scourge, which is exacerbated by the porosity of our border with Haiti and our status as a transit country for the illicit traffic in illicit substances, has permeated our society and increased the incidence of violence and the number of innocent victims. Rampant crime and looting make it easier to gain access to such weapons, posing a threat to peace, stability and security and impeding development. The Dominican Republic has implemented an active disarmament programme focused on the civilian population, which has considerably reduced the number of fatalities attributed to such arms.

Our considerable efforts have not, however, been sufficient. They need to be supported by international efforts to shed light on this complex, lucrative and harmful trade. This goal should be identified by the international community as a priority in the field of disarmament. Any measure that would contribute to controlling the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons would help to create a climate of peace, greater harmony and global security. It would also increase the prospects for conflict prevention and mitigate the destructive effects of conflicts on many civilian populations, in particular in developing countries.

In conclusion, we congratulate the Commission on its contribution to the development of global standards that, without a doubt, have been beneficial to international security. We therefore hope that further steps will be taken at this session on the ambitious disarmament agenda that we have set for ourselves with a view to a successful outcome.

Mrs. Grau (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin today by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. You can count on my delegation's involvement in the work of Working Groups I and II at this second session of the current cycle.

My statement in this general debate focuses on two points, the first of a general nature and the second more specifically related to the 2010 session.

Regarding the first, more general point, it would be useful for the Disarmament Commission to revisit its working methods and open itself to ideas from outside in order to reinforce its credibility. The Commission's difficulties in reaching a consensus are long-standing and have raised questions concerning its usefulness and doubts about its capacity to contribute to disarmament.

It is true that, since 1999, the Commission has been unable to fulfil its mandate to deliberate disarmament issues and make recommendations to the General Assembly. In 1999 and even before that, however, the Commission had fulfilled its mandate by adopting by consensus texts that included principles, guidelines or recommendations. This shows that the Commission is indeed capable of contributing to achieving progress on disarmament. Progress is still, as always, needed. The Disarmament Commission can add real value to the overall United Nations disarmament machinery. To that end, a review of its working methods could prove very useful.

My second, more specific point relating to this session is that, following the difficulties experienced in adopting the 2009 agenda, it is essential to make progress in our work on making recommendations on, first, achieving nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons; and secondly, the elements of a declaration of the 2010s as the fourth

disarmament decade. The current environment is indeed conducive to reanimating our work, thanks to the previous concrete work carried out by the two Chairs of the Working Groups.

Progress at this session would ensure the credibility to which I referred earlier. The next Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will undeniably have a direct impact on the atmosphere in the Commission. But that should not deter delegations from pursuing their shared objective of achieving disarmament in order to strengthen world peace and security.

Mr. Okuda (Japan): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission. I would also like to extend congratulations to the newly elected members of the Bureau. The delegation of Japan will provide its utmost support to you and to the Bureau member States during this session.

Ever since United States President Barack Obama declared his commitment to seeking a world without nuclear weapons in April 2009, there have been numerous developments around the world concerning nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. For instance, in September 2009, the Security Council convened a summit on nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, and the Global Summit on Nuclear Security will be held in April 2010. Moreover, the United States and the Russian Federation recently concluded their negotiations on a START follow-on treaty.

While these efforts certainly serve to advance nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, ongoing nuclear issues remain, including the nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the threat of nuclear terrorism. Japan believes that the first step to eliminating these nuclear threats is for the entire globe to embrace the vision of a world without nuclear weapons. To that end, we must commit ourselves to the pursuit of a peaceful and safe world without nuclear weapons through a focused, practical and incremental approach.

Specifically, substantial progress in the implementation of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the achievement of a meaningful agreement on all three pillars of the Treaty at the Review Conference in May, the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and the prompt commencement of negotiations on and conclusion of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons are crucial to the international community's disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

Furthermore, as a first practical step towards a world without nuclear weapons, Japan finds worthy of attention such ideas as enhancing the effectiveness of security assurances not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or retaining nuclear weapons solely for the purpose of deterring others from using such weapons.

From this point of view, Japan submits to the General Assembly on an annual basis a draft resolution entitled "Renewed determination towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons". In addition, drawing upon the valuable recommendations contained in the report of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, which was a joint initiative of Japan and Australia, the Governments of the two countries submitted a package proposal of practical measures to advance nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation as a working paper for the upcoming NPT Review Conference. We invite Member States to join in our efforts and express our hope that this proposal will be reflected in the final document of the Conference.

Japan is convinced that, if the aforementioned efforts see steady progress, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation will be comprehensively advanced and the 2010s will be a remarkable decade for these issues. It is fortunate, in that connection, that the current session of the Disarmament Commission will discuss a draft declaration for a fourth disarmament decade. It is Japan's view that the declaration should outline the most important principles concerning disarmament and non-proliferation within the broad areas of disarmament in a concise and well-balanced manner and should serve as a guideline providing insight for the 2010s.

Japan also attaches great importance to the issue of conventional weapons, which continue to cause widespread loss of life throughout the world. Japan appreciates that discussion will take place on this issue during the current cycle under the item entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of

conventional weapons". However, it may be preferable to submit and share among Member States written comments concerning the outcome document during the intersessional period, as the deliberation period in the current cycle will be brief.

A good basis for discussion on this topic was established in the last Disarmament Commission cycle. As Japan places importance on confidence-building through such measures as the Register of Conventional Arms and the standardized instrument for reporting military expenditures, we will participate actively in the discussions.

The Disarmament Commission at one time had the distinction of producing various useful guidelines and recommendations. In recent years, however, there have been no substantive outcomes. The Commission should draft recommendations from the perspective of seeking to recover its former important role. Japan had high hopes for the adoption of the draft declaration of a fourth disarmament decade during last year's session, but this did not materialize. In the current session, we should strive to adopt the draft declaration at an early stage and thereby contribute to the revitalization of the Commission and to giving renewed momentum towards the goals of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission. I am confident that, under your able leadership and with the professional assistance of the Secretariat, the Commission will have a fruitful session this year.

My delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The first substantive agenda item, dealing with the issue of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, is of great relevance to international security. The greatest threat to international and regional security and human civilization arises from the continued existence of nuclear weapons. Nuclear-weapon States in the twenty-first century continue to believe in doctrines that justify achieving security by relying on nuclear arsenals and threatening the lives of millions of men, women and children.

The Islamic Republic of Iran strongly believes that the most effective way to remove the nuclear threat is the total elimination of nuclear weapons. At the time of its conclusion, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was seen as a genuine promise to rid the world from the nuclear nightmare. However, 40 years after the entry into force of the NPT, the nuclear threat persists, and real progress towards nuclear disarmament has yet to be achieved. More than 25,000 nuclear weapons still exist. Public opinion around the world is extremely weary of the continuation of this situation and rightly expects the nuclear-weapon States to take expeditious and concrete actions to fulfil their contractual obligations with regard to nuclear disarmament.

Against this backdrop, the Islamic Republic of Iran, along with the overwhelming majority of Member States, maintains its position that the elimination of nuclear weapons remains the highest priority for the international community.

In the past decade, certain developments have given rise to the pervasive concern that some nuclear-weapon States have no genuine intention of fulfilling their disarmament obligations under the NPT. If the NPT is to endure, it is essential that the nuclear-weapon States prove that they are serious about their commitments.

We look forward to the fulfilment by some nuclear-weapon States of their stated intention to come into full compliance with their nuclear disarmament obligations under the NPT. While the recent movement is a necessary step in the right direction, neither the speed nor the scope of such movement is sufficient for implementing the nuclear disarmament part of the NPT. Limited bilateral and unilateral arms reductions fall far short of international expectations for real and effective steps towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons and can never be a substitute for the obligation of nuclear-weapon States to completely eliminate nuclear weapons. Such reductions should go beyond the decommissioning of nuclear weapons. To be effective, reductions in nuclear weapons must be irreversible, internationally verifiable and transparent.

Our efforts in this Commission should be aimed at reinforcing the interrelated pillars of the NPT, a treaty that is the foundation of nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that the best way to guarantee the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is to ensure the full and non-selective

implementation of the NPT and its universality. In this context, failure to implement effective nuclear disarmament measures increases the danger of the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The lack of implementation of nuclear disarmament obligations is not the only challenge facing the NPT. Some nuclear-weapon States are proliferating nuclear weapons horizontally and vertically by transferring nuclear weapons technology and materials to non-parties to the NPT, by developing new types of nuclear weapons or modernizing them, and by continuing nuclear-weapon-sharing arrangements with non-nuclear-weapon States, particularly through the deployment of nuclear weapons in the European NATO countries. The Commission needs to reflect on those challenges and to recommend ways and means to address them.

Nuclear-weapon States are sending conflicting signals on non-proliferation. For instance, on the one hand they say they want to prevent proliferation by strengthening the NPT; on the other hand, by allocating and spending billions of dollars to improve their arsenals, they send very strong signals that they want to retain nuclear weapons and continue to view them as vital to their security. If further proliferation is to be prevented, the nuclear-weapon States have to take serious and systematic steps to de-emphasize the role and importance of nuclear weapons.

The universality of the NPT should be vigorously promoted, in particular in regions of tension. In that context, the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East as a zone free from nuclear weapons is an essential measure. The Israeli regime is the only non-party to the NPT in the Middle East region. Its unlawful nuclear weapons programme, which has been assisted by France, seriously threatens both regional and international peace and security and has blocked the achievement of the universality of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in the Middle East region.

The right of all NPT States parties to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes without discrimination constitutes one of the basic pillars of the Treaty. The balance between rights and obligations, which is the basis of any sound legal instrument, guarantees the longevity of the NPT by providing incentives for membership and compliance. Non-proliferation measures or further progress in strengthening safeguards must not prejudice the national development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy or cooperation among NPT States parties for peaceful uses.

The inalienable rights of States parties extend to all aspects of peaceful technologies and are not limited to specific areas. The Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to pursue all legal aspects of nuclear technology, including the fuel cycle, exclusively for peaceful purposes. No one should harbour the illusion that any proposal or measure that requires the cessation or even suspension of a lawful activity under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) supervision will be accepted.

In that context, while I have the floor I would like to address the statements made yesterday on behalf of the European Union (EU) by the representative of Spain with regard to Iran's peaceful nuclear programme. I would like to place on record that Iran's commitment to the NPT is steadfast. I shall not dignify the rest of the comments made by the EU representative, other than to reject them. We urge EU members to abandon their false assumptions and rhetoric about Iran's nuclear programme and to respect the right of the Iranian nation to nuclear technology under the NPT. EU members should focus on addressing the real threats emanating from the hundreds of nuclear weapons deployed on their continent, rather than concentrating on imaginary proliferation risks and the obfuscation of IAEA reports.

In conclusion, I should like to return to the substantive agenda item on the draft declaration of the fourth disarmament decade. At last year's session, the Working Group had a good start and engaged in serious deliberations. Apart from the counterproductive positions taken by France, there was general agreement that the declaration should be a reflection of agreed principles, priorities and objectives of international community in the field of disarmament. At this year's session, Iran's delegation looks forward to working with other delegations and the Chair of the Working Group to conclude the deliberations and adopt a balanced declaration. Such a result will enable the Commission to devote sufficient time at next year's session to the issue of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons.

Mr. AlNafisee (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to extend to you, Sir, my sincere congratulations on your election as Chairman of the

Disarmament Commission at its 2010 session. We are fully confident that your experience and prudent leadership will lead to the success of the Commission's deliberations during this session. The delegation of Saudi Arabia would also like to reiterate its full support for the deliberations of the Commission under your leadership in order to produce the results to which we all aspire.

My Government would like to reiterate the importance of the pivotal role played by the Disarmament Commission as a specialized technical body that contributes to mobilizing disarmament mechanisms, which are quasi-stalled, and mitigates threats to security and peace throughout the world. In addition, my Government reaffirms its full commitment to the principles of disarmament identified by the international community. That commitment is reflected in our accession to several major conventions and treaties in that regard.

The Kingdom was among the first signatories to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction; and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We have also signed a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), including the annexed small quantities protocol. In addition, we are cooperating on an ongoing basis with the Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) by providing it with the successive required reports and with adequate information on existing and updated regulations and legislation. The latest, although not the last, of those was our national bill on the implementation of the Convention on Chemical Weapons, which the Saudi Council of Ministers adopted on 28 November 2005.

The international community is fully aware that there is no other way to achieve a secure and dignified life for future generations than by strengthening international peace and security through respect for international treaties and conventions on disarmament and non-proliferation by all Member States, as that will help to reduce the nuclear threat and to combat proliferation. In spite of the great efforts exerted in the field of disarmament, including those made by this body and other disarmament forums, there are shortcomings in implementation and serious enforcement due to the lack of political will on the part of some nuclear-weapon States to dispose of their weapons or to subject them to the comprehensive international safeguards regime of the IAEA. That behaviour has led to ongoing competition in nuclear testing and in the development of weapons of mass destruction.

Deviation from the principles of international legitimacy, the provisions of international law and the requirements of international justice has been and remains the main source of the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, including the Gulf region. The decades-long attempt to turn a blind eye to the nuclear programme conducted by Israel — which does not even claim to produce electricity, but produces only weapons of mass destruction — constitutes an original sin that has prompted some countries to move forward in the development of their nuclear capabilities by invoking the double standard to justify non-compliance with the resolutions of international legitimacy in that regard. Again, we believe that the easiest, fastest and most effective solution is to declare the Middle East, including the Gulf region, a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, without exception.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia supports the right of all countries to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, including the right to have access to know-how and peaceful nuclear technology; at the same time, it calls on all parties to remain on the path of negotiations and peaceful solutions. In this forum, my delegation calls upon all parties to commit themselves to a peaceful solution to the Iranian nuclear issue and stresses the importance of cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency in that regard, especially since Iran has always declared that its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes, thus providing fertile ground that has not yet been exhausted.

The world today faces grave challenges that increase our Organization's responsibility. We should make hope a beacon that guides us to act with an objective, serious and constructive spirit. That is what we aspire to achieve through the work of this body under your leadership, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Pham Vinh Quang (Viet Nam): At the outset, Sir, on behalf of the Vietnamese delegation, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 2010 substantive session. I am sure that under your skilful stewardship, the work of the Commission will achieve a successful outcome. Viet Nam also wishes to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Our session commences at an important juncture, when there are renewed expectations on addressing various challenges to international security, especially nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The year 2009 witnessed various bilateral and multilateral plans calling for action to reduce nuclear dangers, raising new hope for a world without nuclear weapons. More international conferences and meetings related to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation are scheduled in 2010.

Recently the United States of America and the Russian Federation reached a new bilateral strategic arms treaty. However, the challenges are enormous and far from over. There still exists a nuclear stockpile capable of destroying the entire world many times over. The situation of the proliferation of nuclear weapons is undergoing new and complex developments. Despite many efforts, we are still facing serious problems in reaching consensus on the core issues of the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda.

To overcome this stalemate, Viet Nam is of the view that multilateralism, with the central role of the United Nations, remains essential to any effort to find sustainable solutions to the challenges to peace and security. Therefore, we reaffirm our support for the important role of the Disarmament Commission with its mandate as the sole specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery, and call upon all United Nations Member States to work in a cooperative problem-solving spirit in order to make a breakthrough and achieve agreement on recommendations, based on the agenda of our session. We also appreciate the hard work of Chairs of the two Working Groups and consider their non-papers as laying the solid groundwork for our deliberations.

Regarding the first substantive agenda item, my delegation reiterates its long-standing principled position in full support of general and complete disarmament, with top priority given to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Viet Nam supports all initiatives towards genuine disarmament, including those offered by the Non-Aligned Movement, by the Secretary-General in his five-point proposal and by last September's Security Council summit on nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament (see S/PV.6191), as well as those to be offered by the coming Nuclear Security Summit in early April.

Viet Nam attaches special importance to the upcoming 2010 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and is of the view that the best way to advance nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation is to enhance the effectiveness of the NPT, which is the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

We express our deep concern over the continued existence of nuclear weapons, which pose a destructive threat to mankind. The only absolute guarantee against nuclear catastrophe is the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. We reaffirm the need for nuclear-weapon States to fully comply with all their obligations and commitments under article VI of the Treaty, including the 13 practical steps to which they agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

The promotion of the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes should constitute a solid pillar of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Therefore, the President of Viet Nam made a proposal at the Security Council summit on nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament last September to convene an international conference on the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. We believe that the 2010 NPT Review Conference will offer an opportunity for Member States to review the progress in implementing the Treaty's provisions and to renew their commitment to the principles and purposes of the NPT, as well as to find practical measures to strengthen all three pillars of the Treaty.

Viet Nam wishes to reaffirm the importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating body in the field of disarmament. Last year, as the first President of the Conference, Viet Nam, together with the other Presidents, contributed to the adoption by consensus in 2009 of the programme of work for the Conference. This year, we call on the

Conference on Disarmament to agree on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work as soon as possible. It is important to start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, with a specified time frame, as well as to prohibit their development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use, and to provide for their destruction. Viet Nam attaches great importance to the immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material cut-off treaty.

It is the consistent policy of Viet Nam to oppose war and promote disarmament for the protection of peace. My country remains committed to fulfilling all obligations and responsibilities under disarmament treaties to which it is a party. Recently, in 2006, the President of Viet Nam signed the instrument of ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and, in 2007, Viet Nam concluded with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) an Additional Protocol to its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement.

We strongly support the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world and welcome the Second Conference of States Parties and Signatories of Treaties that Establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, which will be held in April 2010. As an active member of the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, Viet Nam is working hard with other countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to ensure that the South-East Asian region remains free of nuclear weapons. We also take this opportunity to urge the nuclear-weapon States to accede to the Protocol to the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, as an effective step in further strengthening confidence-building measures between nuclear-weapon States and the countries of South-East Asia.

My delegation fully supports the agenda item entitled "Elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade", and believes that the declaration will restore to disarmament issues the high priority they deserve. The declaration should set forth a broad agenda for the United Nations disarmament machinery to pursue during the next 10 years in the areas of arms control, disarmament, non-proliferation and international security. The declaration should be in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the guiding principles of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (resolution S-20/2). It also needs to emphasize the relevance and validity of the disarmament objectives set forth by the First, Second and Third Disarmament Decades and consolidate multilaterally negotiated principles and norms in all areas of disarmament and non-proliferation.

My delegation fully recognizes the challenges and opportunities which the Commission is now facing. We call upon all States Members of the United Nations to display the political will and flexibility, consistent with the relevant guidelines adopted by the General Assembly, necessary to achieve agreement as soon as possible. We will spare no effort to work closely with you, Mr. Chairman, and with the Bureau and all other delegations for a successful outcome of this session.

Mr. Mohamad (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to offer the Sudan's condolences to the delegation of the brotherly Russian Federation for the heinous crime that killed innocent civilians at two subway stations in Moscow.

Allow me also to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this important Commission, especially in view of the fact that you are from a friendly African country that has made well-known contributions to disarmament and multilateralism. We wish you and the other members of the Bureau, as well as the Commission's Working Groups, every success. I also wish to express our appreciation for the efforts of the Department for Disarmament Affairs in revitalizing and reactivating the multilateral mechanisms and treaties in the field of disarmament in the maintenance of international peace and security. I wish to assure you, Sir, that the delegation of the Sudan will actively participate in the deliberations of the Commission in order to realize these objectives and to contribute to the drafting of the declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade.

I also wish to associate my delegation with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on behalf of the African Group, as well as with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Arab Group.

The current session of the Disarmament Commission comes at a time when relevant regional and international developments in the field of armaments and disarmament underscore the fact that the only way to secure international peace and security is to reactivate multilateral efforts aimed at countering the proliferation of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction and to prevent the balance between nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon States from being upset any further.

It is indeed regrettable that the disarmament mechanism has suffered setbacks over the past decade and that many of the major Powers have continued to develop nuclear, chemical and biological technologies and to compete in experimentation under the pretext of strengthening national security and pre-emptive deterrence, in spite of all of the agreements, instruments and protocols calling for the prohibition of such practices. The majority view in this Organization is that selectivity and injustice are applied to addressing disarmament issues. That, in turn, only strengthens the suspicion that these instruments are not effective, especially since such agreements are effectuated not through an increase in adherence but through their full and equal implementation in a transparent manner without double standards.

We welcome the adoption by the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) at its fifty-third ordinary session of two resolutions, one on Israeli nuclear capabilities and the other on the application of IAEA safeguards regime in the Middle East. We also wish to emphasize the importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the only deliberative forum charged with disarmament affairs. We appreciate all the efforts that led to the adoption of the Conference's programme of work last May. We wish to commend our sister Republic of Algeria for the conciliatory efforts it deployed to achieve that consensus.

It is our hope that disarmament issues will be viewed from a new perspective in the light of the global financial crisis and its consequences for developing countries. It is imperative to reduce budget allocations for armaments and to prioritize the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, including combating poverty and natural disasters and favouring the environment and sustainable development. In his opening statement, the Chairman asserted that climate change affects disarmament issues because of the increase in conflicts and the resulting spread of illicit arms in hotspots where competition for resources is very strong.

It is universally recognized that there is an immediate and compelling need to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world. We believe that such zones are one way of strengthening the non-proliferation and disarmament regime and of consolidating regional and international peace and security.

As we all know, security is indivisible. It is true that many countries have signed agreements to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones or have joined them. The signatories of such agreements cover 50 per cent of the surface area of the globe, yet there are many areas of tension that call for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, in particular the Middle East, which could have been turned into a nuclear-weapon-free zone had it not been for the refusal of Israel to subject its nuclear programme to the IAEA's comprehensive safeguards regime. This situation poses a real threat to peace and security, not only in that volatile region of the world, but also throughout the world.

In this respect, we would recall that the resolution adopted on the Middle East in the 1995 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was part of a package that linked the extension of the Treaty and the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. We also appeal to all Member States that have not yet joined African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty to do so as soon as possible, in view of the importance of that agreement as one of the main pillars of non-proliferation on the African continent.

The Sudan is an active partner in all international disarmament efforts. It was among the first countries to have joined such agreements and relevant international instruments as the NPT, the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, to which we adhered after participating in the workshop convened in Vienna on the objectives of the Organization and the methods of work of its various centres throughout the world.

Our capital, Khartoum, also hosted the first meeting of the African Union Commission to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention. That conference produced significant proposals to establish

a chemical-weapon-free zone in Africa and to limit countries' activities in that field to peaceful uses only. In addition, the Sudan has actively contributed to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and has participated in related workshops in Jordan, Cairo, Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Algeria and here in New York.

In addition to nuclear disarmament as a priority of the international community, we pay close attention to the issue of small arms and light weapons. My country, like many others around the world, is severely affected by this phenomenon, which, as delegations know, has economic dimensions complicated by such natural phenomena as climate change, drought, desertification, the struggle for water resources and grazing. As a result, the possession of weapons and the power that results therefrom has become a tradition among local groups, and small arms disarmament is now among our main concerns. Our country is aware of the dangers of this phenomenon and of the need to eradicate it. We have therefore participated in all relevant international and regional events, and are engaged in a national effort to combat the proliferation of small and light weapons. We do so in recognition of the relationship between the spread of these weapons and transnational organized crime, terrorism and drug trafficking.

In this respect, the Sudan is leading multidimensional efforts in Africa within the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and the Sahel and Sahara States grouping, and has made bilateral arrangements with neighbouring States to demarcate borders and strengthen customs and control checkpoints. While we emphasize such efforts, we wish to make it clear that they should be undertaken by the arms-manufacturing States, and not only by the countries affected by the problem.

The arms-manufacturing countries should refrain from exporting weapons to non-State actors or individuals so that they will not have access to such weapons. We stress the importance of providing all the necessary support, especially technical support, to the countries affected by this phenomenon, in accordance with the provisions of section II of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

In conclusion, the Sudan insists on the full right of all countries to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes without restriction. We also note that the Sudan has expressed reservations regarding the possible arms trade treaty, based on the fact that the draft agreement incongruously ties the right to import and export weapons to controversial criteria within the United Nations, including those of human rights and balanced development. We believe that hastening the preparatory steps may weaken the substantive content of the agreement. If the text is not perfectly balanced, the attendant obligations may not be acceptable. This could also lead to the politicization of the agreement, which would affect the interests of developing nations.

We are confident that, under your wise leadership, Mr. Chairman, our deliberations will lead to a consensus on a final declaration which will take into consideration all concerns in the fields of nuclear disarmament, weapons of mass destruction, and small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Acharya (Nepal): I wish to begin by congratulating you, our good friend the Ambassador of Benin, on your election to the Chair and the other members of the Bureau on their election. I am fully confident that, under your able leadership, the Commission's deliberations will lead us towards a successful conclusion.

I wish to thank Mr. Sergio Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for his presentation before this Commission and the contribution of his Office to pushing forward the agenda of disarmament. I align my statement with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The United Nations Disarmament Commission provides an innovative and invaluable forum for deliberations on the disarmament agenda. Yet concrete actions and achievements continue to elude the international community. Despite our continued commitment to general and complete disarmament under effective international control, the stocks of conventional and non-conventional weapons alike have hardly diminished substantially and the size of military expenditures continues to increase. This paradoxical state of affairs continues to challenge us to contain the

arms race and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

We all know that disarmament is not a choice; it is a compelling security imperative. We have been dedicating precious and finite resources to the production of something that runs against our conscience and undermines our long-term collective security and stability. Global peace and security lie in collective prosperity, not in a race for armaments. This fundamental premise must guide us to make continuous and sustained progress towards disarmament and international security.

We need to redouble our efforts to utilize the Commission as a platform for sincerely pursuing our common goal of disarmament. As a result of our deliberations in this body in the past, we have agreed on the guidelines of nuclear-weapon-free zones and the guidelines on conventional arms control. Similarly, the Commission agreed on the guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters, on regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security, and on the guidelines for international arms transfers. It must now be our solemn duty to honour and implement these instruments and to provide further momentum to dealing with the current challenges of contemporary times. It is in this context that my delegation clearly views the need to convene a fourth special session on disarmament to reinvigorate the disarmament process.

We have witnessed horrendous catastrophes wrought by nuclear weapons in the past. It is in this context that my delegation commends the Security Council nuclear summit held on 24 September 2009. We also appreciate the recent progress made by two leading nuclear-weapon States, Russia and the United States, to conclude a post-START agreement. It is imperative that nuclear-weapon States take the responsibility to lead the disarmament efforts from the front.

My delegation supports the Secretary-General's five-point proposal for nuclear disarmament. We also need to strengthen the regime of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and move steadily forward with a view to ultimately eliminating nuclear weapons from our planet. The forthcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT must provide us with a concrete plan of action to achieve a nuclear free world, making simultaneous progress in all three pillars, with the implementation of the 13 practical steps. These three pillars reinforce each other and must be pursued in a holistic manner in order to contribute to creating a stable security environment throughout the world. My delegation stands firmly committed to achieving this goal.

We believe that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones by the various treaties help non-proliferation in the regions. We welcome the entry into force of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia on 21 March 2009 and of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty on 15 July 2009.

My delegation calls for the elimination of chemical, biological and bacteriological weapons in order to achieve the goals of general and complete disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction.

Small arms and light weapons have had devastating effects on many developing countries, particularly conflict-ridden countries. The scourge of small arms and light weapons is an imminent threat that requires our urgent actions. We believe that effective implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons would help curb this problem.

My delegation is of the view that the Conference on Disarmament must revive its role as a multilateral disarmament negotiation forum. We deem it extremely important that negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty be started in earnest in the Conference on Disarmament.

Nepal attaches high importance to multilateral negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation that promote collective ownership, deliberations and responsibility for collective global action. As host of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, Nepal believes that unilateral, bilateral and regional efforts and commitments are enabling steps towards promoting disarmament and international security at the global level.

In conclusion, if global peace, stability and prosperity are our collective goals, we must make real progress in disarmament. To achieve this, we need to move ahead to deliver results, ensuring full and effective implementation of all commitments and taking visionary steps in the days ahead. The

Disarmament Commission must be supported by all in taking the lead in that direction.

Mr. Rao (India): It is indeed a pleasure to convey our congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission, and we assure you of the full cooperation of the Indian delegation. We would like to convey our appreciation to the Chairs of the two Working Groups, Mr. Paolo Cuculi of Italy and Mr. Johann Paschalis of South Africa, for their diligent efforts.

India associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement by the representative of Indonesia.

The Disarmament Commission has a unique role as the universal deliberative forum for in-depth consideration of specific disarmament issues. When Member States showed the requisite political will, the Commission was able to make consensus recommendations on issues ranging from confidence-building measures to the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. India believes that the Commission now has an opportunity, and in fact a responsibility, to once again draw up guidelines and make recommendations of a universal character, reflecting a forward looking vision for a more secure world. The Commission is the universal institutional forum in which to achieve our objectives on the basis of dialogue and consensus.

We are meeting today against the background of considerable excitement and high expectations regarding a new momentum for global nuclear disarmament. At least in terms of aspirations and proposals, nuclear disarmament has moved up on the international agenda. A number of statements have been made by leaders, various commissions and initiatives have presented reports, and scholars, academics and non-governmental organizations have lent their support to nuclear disarmament. The Disarmament Commission should play its rightful role and help make progress towards our shared objective of attaining a world free of nuclear weapons. The Commission can do so by acting as a platform for deliberation resulting in consensus on specific steps that can be taken to realize the vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

India continues to attach the highest priority to the goal of nuclear disarmament. India has consistently maintained that nuclear weapons can be eliminated through a non-discriminatory and universal convention along the lines of the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions. Our support for a nuclear weapons convention providing for the elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time frame was reiterated by India's Prime Minister at the sixty-third session of the General Assembly (see A/63/PV.12). This is in keeping with the goal enshrined in the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan of 1988.

We welcome the progress achieved in the bilateral negotiations between the United States and Russia on further cuts in their nuclear arsenals. States with substantial arsenals should take meaningful steps towards nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing processes. Pending the global and non-discriminatory elimination of nuclear weapons, it is important to take measures to reduce nuclear dangers. Efforts for the expansion of nuclear energy and the reduction of proliferation risks must go hand in hand.

The possibility of terrorist and extremist groups gaining access to nuclear materials is real and could have catastrophic consequences. We are indeed happy that resolutions sponsored by India on this issue in the General Assembly continue to garner wide support. We have in such resolutions sought to highlight these dangers and to stress the need for national and international cooperative measures to prevent terrorists from gaining access to nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

India has also welcomed the initiative of President Obama to host the Nuclear Security Summit next month to address this global challenge.

India is committed to a voluntary and unilateral moratorium on nuclear explosive testing. We affirm our policy of no first use and non-use against non-nuclear-weapon States.

As a nuclear-weapon State and a responsible member of the international community, India is prepared to negotiate a multilateral and internationally verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament. The obstacles placed to launching these negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament cannot but be a cause for disappointment.

The Conference on Disarmament must also address the priority task of nuclear disarmament. India

has proposed a number of measures that can help in moving towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. These measures are the following: reaffirmation of the unequivocal commitment of all nuclear-weapon States to the goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons; reduction of the salience of nuclear weapons in security doctrines; taking into account of the global reach and menace of nuclear weapons, adoption of measures by nuclear-weapon States to reduce nuclear danger, including the risks of accidental nuclear war, and de-alerting of nuclear weapons to prevent unintentional and accidental use of nuclear weapons; negotiation of a global agreement among nuclear-weapon States on no first use of nuclear weapons; negotiation of a universal and legally binding agreement on the non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States; negotiation of a convention on the complete prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; and negotiation of a nuclear weapons convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and on their destruction, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time frame.

While it is important that we maintain the momentum in Working Group I, on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, we should redouble our efforts to reach consensus this year with regard to Working Group II, on elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade.

We should aim at finding consensus on elements that will be of enduring validity; that uphold the priority of nuclear disarmament and the complete elimination of all weapons of mass destruction; that address other dimensions of global security, including space security; and that strengthen the international framework for addressing conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons, and prevent their being used by terrorists. The Disarmament Commission, as is its tradition, should focus on these issues of security, taking into account the global interdependence of peoples and nations.

We also need a new idiom for conducting the international discourse, which is now no longer confined to States but must take into account the wider constituencies: people's voices from the ground expressed in various ways — through non-governmental organizations, peace activists, scholars and academics. In sum, the elements we draw up must help build a durable foundation for strengthening security in the twenty-first century.

This forum can play its part in revitalizing multilateral institutions and dialogue to build confidence and strengthen international security through multilaterally negotiated, legally binding instruments, and can provide assurances of verifiability, irreversibility, compliance and universality.

We remain committed to ensuring a successful session of the Disarmament Commission over the coming weeks and look forward to working towards that end.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.